



City and County of Swansea

## Minutes of the **Armed Forces Community Covenant Signatories Panel**

**Multi-Location Meeting - Lilian Hopkin Room, Guildhall / MS Teams**

**Monday, 14 October 2024 at 2.00 pm**

**Present:** Councillor W G Lewis (Chair) Presided

### **Representing Organisations**

Stephen Boswell	SSAFA
Lt Cdr Andy Davies	Royal Navy
Wing Cdr Phil Flower	Royal British Legion Swansea Branch
Phil Jones	SO Fit
Paul Smith	Veterans RV
Steve Spill	Swansea University Health Board
Stephen Sullivan	Adferiad
Neil Tomlin	Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund
Victoria Williams	Veterans NHS Wales
Simon Winspear	SCVS
Andy McMurray	
Daisy Coleman	Mission Community
Andrew Davies	
Francesca O'Brien	RBL Oystermouth
Gareth Jones	
Jonathan Marks	
Rob Salmon	REACT Disaster Response
Adrian Robinson	Army
Jack Service	
Tony Strutt	V-Aid
Frankee Auditano	
<b>Officer(s)</b>	
David Price Deer	Special Events Manager
Samantha Jenkins	Democratic Services Officer

### **Apologies for Absence**

Ruth Birch, Wayne Jenkins, Adrian Leslie, Captain Huw Williams, Finola Pickwell  
Deb Lewis, Neil Tomlin

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## **71 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interests from Members.**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

**72 Minutes.**

**Agreed** that the minutes of the Panel held on 29 July, 2024 be approved as correct record.

**73 Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer.**

No update available.

**74 Update from MOD.**

Adrian Robinson presented the written update submitted by Capt. Huw Williams and Finola Pickwell detailing progress over recent months and plans for forthcoming events.

Since the last meeting, a safe and skilled driving competition as part of the Commanding Officers sword, was undertaken which the Squadron won. Many of our troops attended training courses to increase their competency and deploy ability be these trade, promotion or driving licence focussed.

In September the Regiment completed its Annual Training Commitment exercise which took place in Pirbright, Maindy barracks and several West Wales training areas. This was a very worthwhile training event that saw the development of new practices and processes in the delivery of command and control. This was also an opportunity for personnel to undertake road transport qualifications and training.

Two of our personnel deployed on Operation Lazurite in support of the Afghanistan Families Relocation Program supporting the integration of former Afghan service personnel and their families who supported UK forces when we were deployed on Operation Herrick. Both personnel expressed their pride in undertaking this role and felt the Afghan people were being correctly set up to succeed as members of UK society.

Members of the Regiment were currently deployed on a three week exercise in Germany, undertaking a simulated exercise without troops. This type of exercise enabled commanders at all levels to demonstrate capability and effectiveness against a virtual enemy, these are quite testing exercises and will undoubtedly identify lessons that will need to be addressed for our next training cycle.

Christmas will see the Regiment undertaking a series of fun and challenging events that will ultimately crown the Champion Squadron for 2024, fingers crossed 223 Squadron will retain the title it won last year.

There were numerous events running over the Remembrance fortnight, which I am sure Mr Flower will brief on.

Further afield than Swansea, Port Talbot will be holding the Mayor of Neath Port Talbot's Festival of Remembrance on Friday the 25 October in The Princess Royal Theatre and on Saturday 26 October, in Aberavon shopping centre will be an uniformed services and charities information day which will include the opening of

the garden of remembrance and the award of the Armed Forces Covenant to companies who have applied for and met the criteria to be awarded this status.

There are 30 armed forces related stands booked in, entertainment throughout the day, with one or two surprises, military vehicles from 157 RLC and 101 REME, a good selection of vintage military vehicles and blue light services will also be attending. We will also be having interactive displays, fun children's activities and the presentation of prizes for our 'Art of Being a Military Child' and 'Art of D-day' competitions, amongst other things going on.

Posters advertising these events would be distributed with the minutes.

On the 3 November a Service of Thanksgiving would be held in Christ Church on Oystermouth Road commencing at 1400 hrs. Everyone is welcome to attend this service and one of the principal aims is to reassociate Christ Church as The Garrison Church of Swansea. If you have not had an opportunity to visit this church, it really is an archive of significant military history associated to the servicemen and women of Swansea. There are commemorations to World War 1 fallen and memorials to World War Two personnel who gave their lives for the freedom of others. There are numerous association standards laid up and memorials to these associations as well.

On the 15 November, a new Memorial will be unveiled on Tawe Bridge to commemorate 'The Kilvey Boys', 70 soldiers from WW1 who paid the ultimate sacrifice during The Great war. The service commences at 1100 hrs and will see the unveiling and dedication of a new memorial, a stunning granite and ironwork structure that will list the 70 fallen soldiers from Kilvey with a portrayal of their lives as workers at the copperworks at the turn of the century, to members of the parish church, soldier fighting in The Great war and their bodies ascending to heaven. Invites have been sent out and space is limited.

Again, I will offer my support to organisations that request it, and if we can help and support, will lean in. as with all organisations, the finances are tight and we may not be able to support some events.

The Chair thanked Adrian Robinson for his informative update.

## **75 Swansea Bay University Health Board, Armed Forces Forum.**

Victoria Williams, Swansea University Health Board, presenting on behalf of Veterans NHS Wales, reported that 35 referrals had been received during the last 3 months and of which 25 had opted-in, 18 individuals had been assessed and would receive therapy. The wait time for assessment was a week and there was no waiting list for individuals accessing therapy. There were currently 25 individuals receiving therapy.

The Clinical Network meeting had recently taken place with the next meeting scheduled for 19 December, 2024. Colleagues were welcome to attend.

She referred to her colleague Sam Tomlinson who had recently had a piece of work recognised and published in the British Nursing Journal.

Work was ongoing in relation to student teaching of both medics and students.

The recruitment of a Psychiatrist was an ongoing challenge as the post had remained vacant for 18 months.

World Mental Health Day had taken place last Thursday and had provided an opportunity to network.

The Chair thanked Victoria Williams for her informative update.

## **76 Supporting Service Children in Education in Wales.**

No update available.

## **77 Update from Panel Members.**

### Fighting With Pride – The LGBT+ Military Charity.

Ruth Birch, Operations Manager Cymru/Wales submitted a written update. It was noted that the reparations from Lord Eatheron's report had started and both herself and her wife were recently at a ceremony at Guildford (Home of the WRAC) with 11 other Veterans to be presented with their berets, cap badges and rainbow pin.

There had been a presentation for RAF Veterans at RAF Cranwell and one of our Welsh Veterans received her Beret, cap badge and rainbow pin at a special ceremony by the Royal Signals.

The second Fighting With Pride Book should be available soon. The Re-Live Veterans mental health comic with four LGBT+ Veterans stories would be available in November, further details would be provided in due course.

There was also a consultation period for the LGBT Armed Forces Memorial that would be dedicated at the National Arboretum in approximately 12 months time. It was a very busy time with Operation Crescendo working to get the financial reparations debate and to scrap the £50 million cap. We will continue to fight with pride until all the reparations are complete.

### Royal British Legion

Phil Flower reported on events taking place throughout City and County of Swansea and provided an update in respect of the following (further details to be circulated via email):

- 3 November 2024 at 11am - 3000 crosses being placed on the green outside Morgans Hotel.
- 3 November 2024 at 2pm – Memorial Service at Christ Church.
- Festival of Remembrance - free event hosted by City and County of Swansea. He detailed the entertainment and stated that would enable the Royal British Legion to engage with as many veterans organisations as possible.
- 2 November – Swansea City Football Club versus Oxford Collection.

- 10 November 2024 – St Mary's Parade.
- The Lord Mayors Cadets (representing the Sea, Army and RAF) had recently been appointed. The Cadets would be invited to appropriate ceremonial events during the year.
- 17 October 2024 – Opening of the Poppy Appeal in the Brangwyn Hall - Reverend Canon Justin Davies for St Marys would be ordained as Chaplain for the Royal British Legion and the Royal Air Forces Association at the opening ceremony.
- VE Day 80 - 10 & 11 May 2025 – was being led by the Royal British Legion. The two day event comprised a concert in the Brangwyn Hall followed by a service and parade through Swansea.

### The Poppy Factory

Andrew Millership reported that the Poppy Factory were advertising a new position within the Swansea area. The Navigator post would assist veterans whose barriers are too significant for employment and who struggle with housing and social isolation. He stated that he would invite the successful candidate to the next meeting.

Victoria Williams stated that she was very excited about the role of the Navigator post and there would be regular meetings with the Poppy Factory to assist individuals to consider getting back into work.

### Veterans RV

Paul Smith reported on forthcoming events (details to be circulated via email):

- Beach Clean up – 3 November 2024.
- Cold Water Awareness Workshop & Social Dip – 20 October 2024.
- Remembrance Dip – 9 November 2024.
- Model Making Club – Morriston Fire Station (every Tuesday (6-8pm))

Victoria Williams acknowledged the great work being undertaken by Veterans RV in the Community.

### Bulldogs

Gareth Jones, introduced himself as the newly appointed Veterans Project Manager for the Bulldogs in Port Talbot. The last few months had been busy with regular drop-in sessions on a Tuesday and Friday 10-1pm which was going from strength to strength. Female veterans drop-in sessions were also being developed on the last Monday of each month (6-8pm). A new Remembrance Monument was being developed with a launch on 8 November various invitations had been distributed. Furthermore, a new café was scheduled in November 2024. The organisation worked with Veterans NHS Wales.

### SSAFA

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Cont'd

Stephen Boswell provided an update in relation to the changes within SSAFA. The service had expanded with a new regional office and had taken on responsibility for all casework in the region. He detailed the team, their role and areas of work and the signposting services offered. The main support headlines offered by SSAFA included housing, housing maintenance, debt, medical care, housing goods, and mobility.

Stephen Boswell stated he would distribute the SSAFA Referral form to all colleagues via email.

Victoria Williams, Veterans NHS Wales, requested a SSAFA representative to attend future meetings of the Clinical Network meeting.

The Chair thanked all participants for their informative presentations.

The meeting ended at 2.35 pm

**Chair**